



### CHAPTER 13: CIVIL TRIAL ARC (3): THE STAIRCASE OF TRUTH





AND BOTH BOYS EXPLOITED MS. VAN GOOH'S READINESS TO PRESERVE HER INTO PAINTING FOR THEM.



FIRST, THE TWO SHARED HIDDEN COMMON GROUND IN MS. VAN GOOH.

SHE'S PONGBO'S TEACHER AND DA VINCI'S SISTER. THOSE ARE THE RESPECTIVE TIES BETWEEN THEM.



I DID THINK MS. VAN GOOH WAS BEING FORCED TO BE THE SHORTCUT FOR BOYS.

I AGREE WITH YOU UP TO THIS POINT.

TURN BELIEF INTO PRODUCTION, RIGHT?



THE PROOF IS THESE ROUGH SKETCHES YOU FOUND IN HER HOUSE OF THE FIRST TWO PAIRS OF WORKS.



...THE ABSOLUTELY IDENTICAL THIRD PAIR OF PAINTINGS!

THAT WHICH WAS THE GENESIS OF THE TRIAL...



BUT THIS PLAYGROUND HERE...

THERE'S STILL SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE EXPLAINED BY THAT.

THAT  
DOESN'T  
REALLY  
MAKE  
SENSE.

YET  
KEPT THE  
OLDER  
ONES  
AROUND?

W-  
WHY I  
DUNNO!

MAYBE  
SHE  
JUST  
THREW  
THEM  
OUT?

THERE  
WERE  
ROUGH  
SKETCHES  
OF ONLY  
THE FIRST  
TWO PAIRS,  
NOT THE  
THIRD.  
WHY'S  
THAT?

IF YOU  
WERE  
AN VAN  
BOSS...

THINK  
ABOUT  
IT.

WHA, IT'S  
NOT. IT'S  
ACTUALLY  
WEIRD.

BUT GIVEN  
THESE FIRST  
TWO PAIRS,  
IT'S LOGICAL  
TO CONCLUDE  
THAT SHE  
PAINTED THE  
THIRD TOO!

DO  
THAT WHEN  
RUMORS OF  
PLAGIARISM  
ALREADY  
EXIST, AND  
YOU'LL CAUSE  
A LAWSUIT  
FOR SURE.

WHY WOULD  
A TEACHER,  
WHO CAN'T LET  
IT BE KNOWN  
THAT SHE'S  
GHOSTWRITING  
FOR HER  
STUDENTS,  
DO SUCH A  
THING?

IN  
SHORT, THE  
CONCLUSION  
TO DRAW  
HERE...

...WOULD  
YOU PAINT  
THE EXACT  
SAME THING  
FOR EACH  
OF THEM?

110  
END

THE ONLY  
COMMONALITY  
YOU FOUND  
BETWEEN THE  
TWO, EVEN WITH  
ALL YOUR INTEL  
GATHERING  
SKILL, WAS  
MS. VAN GOGH,  
RIGHT?

IF IT  
WASN'T  
MS. VAN  
GOSH,  
THEN WHO  
DID PAINT  
THEM?

...IS THAT  
MS. VAN GOSH  
WASN'T THE  
ONE WHO  
PAINTED THE  
THIRD PAIR  
OF WORKS?

THEN WE  
JUST TAKE  
IT AT FACE  
VALUE.

THE  
7/4

...ARE  
PICASSO  
AND  
DA VINCI  
THEM-  
SELVES !!

THE  
ONLY  
ONES  
WHO  
COUL'DVE  
PAINTED  
THOSE  
PIECES  
...

WELL, NOT  
BUT I CAN  
SEE YOU'RE  
NOT THE  
ONE WHO  
COUL'DVE  
PAINTED  
THEM.



THE ONLY  
ONE WHO  
COUL'DVE  
PAINTED  
THEM.

MOVE, IT  
WAS NO  
FLAME.

THEY  
COUL'DVE

THEY  
DID THESE  
THEMSELVES  
AND JUST  
HAPPENED  
TO PAINT  
THE EXACT  
SAME  
THING BY  
COINCIDENCE  
?



FOR THE VERY REASON I EXPLAINED EARLIER, BECAUSE OF WHAT WOULD HAPPEN...

...IF THEY DID SUCH A THING.

YOU'RE SAYING THE TWO ~~POSSIBLY~~ PAINTED THE SAME PICTURE! BUT WHY?!!

...IT'S GOTTA BE INTENTIONAL!

SO IF IT ISN'T COINCIDENCE...



WE'RE ON THE SEARCH FOR NOW

BOTH THEIR MOTIVES WERE, IN FACT, TO GET A CLASS-ROOM SESSION CONVENED.

DID THAT WHEN RUMORS OF PLAGIARISM ALREADY EXIST, AND YOU'LL CAUSE A LAWFUIT FOR SURE.

THAT'S RIGHT



...BUT I THINK THE KEY IS THE REASON... THE TWO USED TO INTIMIDATE HER.

BARUTON, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU DIDN'T DEEK DEEPER THAN THE SURFACE...

HUFI SHADDER MEANS!

ALL SORTS OF TRUTHS GET REVEALED DURING A CLASSROOM SESSION, NOT

...THE REASON... BE THAT'D HAVE A TEACHER ASKED TO IT?

WHAT THE HELL COULD...

A TEACHER SHORT-WITING FOR HER STUDENTS ISN'T NORMAL

I WOULD THINK ABOUT IT.

AND THERE'S ONE MORE TRUTH HERE THAT STILL HASN'T COME TO LIGHT.



IN  
SHORT,  
"USE A  
GHOST-  
WRITER  
TO  
GHOST-  
WRITE!"

WHILE  
Pondering  
this, I  
RECALLED  
THE PHRASE  
"TO FIGHT  
FIRE WITH  
FIRE."



MR. VAN  
GOGH.



I HEAR YOU ARE  
STUDYING UNDER  
NOTED PAINTER  
SUENARI YAMAO AT  
ART COLLEGE,  
BUT...



AM I  
WRONG  
?!?

...  
AREN'T  
YOU  
ALSO  
GHOST-  
PAINTING  
FOR HIM--  
FOR  
SUENARI  
YAMAO!!



BUT GRADE  
SCHOOL  
PICTURE  
SHOULDN'T BE  
THAT TOUGH,  
SO I DECIDED  
THERE HAD TO  
BE SOMETHING  
ELSE GOING  
ON.

I INITIALLY  
THOUGHT  
IT WAS  
BECAUSE  
PAINTING  
FOR  
PICASSO  
AND DA  
VINCI DIDN'T  
LEAVE HER  
MUCH TIME.



I CAN'T  
SEEM  
TO PAINT  
ANYTHING  
ORIGINAL.



I HAVE TWO  
GROUPS  
FOR MY  
THOUGHTS

FIRST, HOW  
CAN I WIN  
THE OTHER  
DAY.



...BUT IT'S  
EQUALLY VALID  
TO CONCLUDE  
THAT AS THE  
LATTER CASE IS  
ATTRIBUTABLE TO  
SHORTWRITING,  
THEM SO TOO  
CAN THE  
FORMER BE.

BACK THEN,  
I THOUGHT  
IT JUST A  
REFLECTION OF  
THE  
MENTOR'S  
INFLUENCE...

SENSE-  
LESS ARE  
ALL THE  
MENTORS.

A  
STUDENT'S  
VOICE  
HEARS...

AND THE  
SECOND...  
IS THAT  
I'D NOTICED  
THAT DAY HOW  
GUENARD YARD  
AND MS. VAN  
SOON'S  
PARTINGS  
WERE SIMILAR  
IN THE SAME  
WAY MS. VAN  
SOON AND  
PICASSO'S  
WERE.



AND SO,  
THEY  
BLACK-  
MAILED  
HER...

...IT HAS TO HAVE  
BEEN EVEN MORE  
OBVIOUS TO THE  
TWO BOYS, WHO'VE  
BEEN LOOKING AT  
MS. VAN SOON'S  
ART FOR A VERY  
LONG TIME.

SINCE EVEN A  
NON-ART EXPERT  
LIKE WE COULD  
TELL THROUGH  
LOOKING AT  
THE ART...



I WANT YOU  
TO PAINT MY  
PIECES FOR  
ME TOO!

HER MIND  
ALREADY  
NUMB FROM  
GHOSTING  
FOR MARSTRO  
YARD, SHE...

...EASILY  
FELL INTO  
THEIR TRAP  
IN ORDER  
TO PROTECT  
THAT SECRET.



YOU  
THOUGHT  
YOU  
WOULDN'T  
BE FOUND  
OUT?



YIKES,  
I'VE ALSO  
BEEN IN  
SOCKS OF  
A SLUMP  
LATELY  
HE.







IT'S MY JOB  
TO REPRESENT  
YOUR INTERESTS.  
AND I HAVE  
CONFIDENCE  
IN MY ABILITIES  
TO DO SO...

I'M YOUR  
ATTORNEY.



WE'VE  
FINALLY  
REACHED  
THE NINTH  
STEP.

WELL,  
THANK YOU  
HAVE A  
PLEASANT  
DAY.



JACKSON



...TO  
CLIMB  
THE  
FINAL  
STEP  
YOUR-  
SELF,  
IF YOU'D  
LIKE?



...BUT  
YOU'RE  
WELCOME  
...

I...  
JUST  
WANTED  
MR. VAN  
GASH TO  
BE LIKE  
SHE WAS  
BEFORE.



I'M GLAD  
I PUT MY  
TRUST IN  
YOU.

THANKS.

I MEAN, THEY LOOKED EXACTLY LIKE MY BELOVED TEACHER'S WORK.

THAT IT WAS MR. YAN GOOH WHO WAS PAINTING YANPO'S PICTURES.

A LITTLE RESEARCH, AND I FIGURED OUT WHY RIGHT AWAY.

EVER SINCE SHE STARTED ART COLLEGE, SHE JUST DIDN'T SEEM TO ENJOY PAINTING ANYMORE.

...AND I THOUGHT UP WAYS TO HELP HER.

WE PUT OUR HEADS TOGETHER.

THAT'S WHEN I FOUND OUT HE WAS HER LITTLE BROTHER.

I DECIDED TO CONSULT SA YING.

THAT'S WHY WE CREATED THE EXACT SAME PAINTING AND BROUGHT ABOUT THE CLASSROOM SCANDAL.

...AND IF WE DID A HALF-BAKED JOB, YANPO MIGHT JUST CAST HER OFF AND SHE'D BE FINISHED.

BUT WE DIDN'T THINK ANYONE'D TAKE US SERIOUS SCHOLARLY SERIOUSLY.

WE DID CONSIDER OTHER ANGLES OF BRINGING THIS TO LIGHT.

WE'D BE ABLE TO PIN YANPO DOWN FOR SURE!!

...AND MOST OF ALL, THERE WOULD BE COLLECTING EVIDENCE AND PROVING THE TRUTH FOR US!

THE JUDGMENT WOULD HAVE BINDING LEGAL FORCE...



YOU WENT  
THROUGH  
ALL THIS  
JUST FOR  
THAT?



IT  
MIGHT  
BE  
WORTH  
IT





...AND I ASSUMED THAT ONE OF YOU HAD COPIED THE OTHER ON THAT THIRD ONE.

I REALLY THOUGHT YOU TWO HAD ME GHOSTPAINT FOR YOU MERELY OUT OF YOUR RIVALRY..



I'M SO SORRY!!



BUT I..

BELIEVE ME, IT WAS REALLY PAINFUL TO BLUNDER, YOU, MY FAVORITE TEACHER!

NO, NO! IT'S ME WHO SHOULD APOLOGIZE



I STARTED FEELING A BIT OF HAPPINESS THAT MY PAINTING, WHICH UNDER MY OWN NAME HADN'T GOTTEN NOTICED AT ALL, WERE MAKING A SPLASH AS SECONDARY KAMADO'S WORKS.

I WAS HAVING TROUBLE PAYING MY TUITION.

THAT'S WHEN HASEGRO YAKO APPROACHED ME ABOUT GHOSTPAINTING, AND I COULDN'T TURN HIM DOWN.



I'M JUST A..

I CAN NEVER BE MY OLD SELF AGAIN..



I'M SORRY!

...GHOST...



...UNTIL IT WAS ABOUT TIME TO PAINT, IT WAS NO LONGER MY FAVORITE ACTIVITY

BUT THE BIGGER HASEGRO YAKO'S NAME BECAME, THE GREATER THE GUILT I FELT..



I WAS A  
BAD BIG  
SISTER...

...AND A  
TERRIBLE  
TEACHER  
TOO!!

SO SORRY!!

...EVEN  
THOUGH  
YOU TWO  
NEVER  
DID!!

I GAVE  
UP ON  
MYSELF  
...

I HOPE  
SHE CAN  
ENJOY  
PINTING  
AGAIN  
ONE DAY

JUDG-  
MENT

...AND  
OWN STUFF,  
LIKE SHE  
USED TO.

AND  
THIS TIME,  
GETTING TO  
PAINT...

I WISH I COULD  
REPRODUCTION!!





YOUR HANDS ARE BLUE, SARUTORI.

I LOST.



...MY CLASS HAS AN INCREDIBLE ATTORNEY!



PLUS, I GOT SO OBSESSED WITH COMPETING AGAINST YOU...

JUST LIKE YOU SAID, I RELIED ONLY ON *EVIDENCE* AND DIDN'T TRY TO DISCOVER AT WHAT LAY BENEATH.



...THAT I FORGOT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ABOUT BEING AN ATTORNEY.

I'M YOUR ATTORNEY. IT'S MY JOB TO REPRESENT YOUR INTERESTS...

PROBABLY I DON'T REALLY CARE ABOUT YOU!



I WAS ONLY ABLE TO EXTRACT THE TRUTH THANKS TO YOUR *EVIDENCE*... AND THIS, I THINK IT'S A *DEBAT*.

NO, SARUTORI...

BUT YOU KNOW, IN THIS CLASSROOM SESSION, I HAD NO *PROOF* AT ALL.

WELL, IN REGARDS TO THAT, JUST MAKE UP FOR IT.

LET ME PROVE TO YOU WHO I AM.







WHICH MEANS  
WE HAD BETTER  
DO EVERYTHING  
OURSELVES!!

HE CAN'T  
DEPEND ON THE  
ADULTS

HE  
DIDN'T  
COMMIT  
ANY  
CRIME!  
THIS IS  
RIDICU-  
LOUS!



...AND  
GET  
OUTTA  
HERE  
SOME-  
DAY!

THE THREE OF  
US ARE GONNA  
PROVE OUR  
INNOCENCE  
...



...AND GET  
OURSELVES  
RELEASED FROM  
OUR UNWARRANTED  
IMPRISONMENT!

AND IN  
FOURTH  
GRADE, OUR  
FIRST UNDER-  
STANDING AS  
ATTORNEYS  
WAS TO  
PROVE OUR  
INNOCENCE...

FROM THAT  
DAY ON, WE  
PRACTICALLY  
STUDIED LAW  
AND JUDGMENT.



AND  
YET, HE  
MANAGED TO  
OVER-  
COME IT...

WELL  
WE HAD  
NONE?

HE TOLD ME  
ALL OF THIS  
GUTHY  
CASUALLY  
BUT I HAD  
INSTANT  
CORRECTIONS  
AROUND A  
PART THAT  
I CAN'T  
EVER BRING  
TO IMAGINE.

THOUGH OUR  
PERSONALITIES  
AND APPEARANCES  
HAD CHANGED A  
LOT BY THEN.



SCHOOL-  
THOSE  
RESPECT  
IS HARD  
TO ADMIT.

YEAH,  
I'M  
GONNA  
KICK  
YOUR  
BUTT!

HEY,  
PICASSO,  
WE CAN  
FINALLY  
REALIZE  
BATTLING  
EACH OTHER  
AGAIN.



BUT NO  
MATTER  
HOW MANY  
STARS  
YOU  
CLIMB...

HOW TRY  
HARD  
BECAUSE  
YOU DON'T  
WANT TO  
LOSE.



AND  
YOU'RE  
ABLE TO  
KEEP  
CLIMBING  
THANKS TO  
HAVING  
SUCH A  
REAL.

... THERE'S  
ANOTHER  
SET OF  
SHOULDER'S  
NEXT TO  
YOU.

IT  
SEEMS THIS  
WASN'T BEEN  
THE FIRST  
THAT HAD  
FORCED A  
PEOPLE TO  
GROUNTS  
FOR HIM.

LATER,  
SUCHARY  
HARD  
SURVIVED  
THE FULL  
FORCE OF  
SOCIAL  
REPERIVE

AND SO,  
CLASS  
B-IT'S  
FIRST  
CIVIL  
TRIAL  
CAME  
TO A  
CLOSE.

I THINK I'M  
JUST A BIT  
TALKING OF  
HARVEST.



...BUT SHE  
SAID SHE  
WANTED  
TO SEE  
VARIOUS  
THINGS  
AND THEN  
ANOTHER  
LOOK AT  
HIMSELF.

A WOMAN  
SOUNDING  
'LOUNGEY'  
OF SELF-  
PACEDNESS

AS FOR ME,  
DAN BOON...  
AFTER A LOT  
OF HARD  
THINKING,  
SHE GAVE UP  
COLLECTOR AND  
SET OUT ON  
A TRIP  
ACROSS  
JAPAN,  
FINDING  
SUPPLIES  
IN NEED.



AFTER A  
LITTLE  
WHILE, A  
PUNTER  
FROM HER  
ARRIVED AT  
TERRA  
BLONCH-  
DARK

IT  
WAS  
THE  
FIRST  
TIME  
SHE  
HAD  
BEEN  
AT THE  
TOP OF A  
HILL OF  
LOVE  
HARVEST

...AND IT  
LOOKED TO  
ALL OF US  
LIKE HER  
FACE WAS  
SMILING.



The  
Bonds  
The Cap-ten

